

CITIZENS ADVISORY COUNCIL

Meeting Notes

March 15, 2006

Attendance: Bryce Christensen, Brad Schmitz, Mike Moore, Dwayne Andrews, Erin O'Connor, John Ensign, John Little, Mike Moore, Jack Austin, Warren Broeder, Mary Zeiss Stange, Julie Jordan, Mark Forman, Arthur Hayes III, Chris Pileski, Todd Steadman, John Wilkinson, Greg Mohr, Rob Reukauf, and Jim Schaefer.

Ginger Omland and Larry Woolston not present.

Bryce Christensen, Regional Supervisor, began the meeting by welcoming everyone and reviewing the agenda. He then addressed the wolf issue that has been occurring recently in McCone and Garfield counties. There have been 6 incidences with livestock depredation (sheep). The professionals from the Wildlife Service are now officially calling the animal a wolf, though tracks and stride length are on the small side for a wolf. There is still the potential that the animal is a hybrid. Due to the fact that the animal has potentially covered a large geographic area, the possibility of more than one has not been completely ruled out. General discussion about wolf habits and the difficulty in tracking the animal occurred. It was brought up that lots of coyotes are getting killed in the process of many different folks out looking for the wolf. Information on wolves and the rules that govern man's interaction was distributed to everyone.

John Ensign, Region 7 Wildlife Manager:

John gave an excellent presentation on the North American Model of Wildlife Management, Region 7 Wildlife Management Philosophy and economics of public access in southeastern Montana. History of wildlife conservation and how wildlife was established as a public trust was explained. The erosion of that trust was also covered, along with efforts that region 7 has implemented to prevent this from occurring. Statistics covering wildlife population and harvest numbers were explained. Wildlife survey efforts were explained. Revenue generated in this region from hunting was shown by species. Information from the Montana Challenge was used to support what is happening with our population and demographics in southeastern Montana. Council members are to receive a hardcopy of the power point presentation.

Group Discussion

General discussion was held on the purpose of the CAC and how it can function to support and find solutions to issues facing FWP.

Dwayne and Todd Steadman mentioned that Montanan's need to be capitalizing on the other resources outside of hunting, such as watchable wildlife.

Mary Zeiss Stange inquired about discussions and relations between FWP and BLM. She felt the BLM was focused on a single use now, that being mineral development. Bryce summed up that we do not have the staff and time to address issues to the depth of some other agencies such as the BLM, but we do have effective and continuing dialogue with them.

Rob Reukauf commented that we need to get people into these small rural communities that are on the verge of dying out. Pull visitors off the interstate to visit the small communities and discover what natural attributes they have to offer.

John Ensign and several members mentioned how revenue gets spread around from hunting and other recreational activities. Local businesses like motels, gas stations, restaurants all benefit from recreational dollars. The single dollar rolls over many times in a community.

Art Hayes and Todd Steadman discussed how there seems to be a trend in the outfitting industry, especially involving outfitters working in multiple states or going from one end of the state to the other.

Mark Forman mentioned that non-resident landowners purchase Montana acreage and generally close that area to public entry. This is an expanding problem in all of Montana.

Greg Mohr asked about the Black Bridge FAS acquisition. Bryce gave background of this project; the Environmental Assessment out for public comment is for the acquisition of the 71 acres for a Fishing Access Site.

General discussion was held on DNRC land banking program. Dwayne and Chris Pileski clarified this process and what is going on with the issue.

Next Meeting:

There is a need to focus on one issue category at the next meeting. Bryce would especially like to focus on access issues, as that was the most prevalent topic that came up at the initial meeting. Several members would like to see a longer meeting so there would be ample time to hold discussions on the topics at hand. The general consensus was that longer meeting would be implemented.

The next meetings are scheduled to be held on June 7th and August 16th, both from 4:00 to 9:00 p.m at Regional Headquarters. The focus topic for the next meeting will be access.